“Mein Kampf” and Europe

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DR. G. P. GOOCH in the Chair.

Very few great men of action have ever disclosed beforehand so clearly as Adolf Hitler the principles and purposes that guide their acts. Building up a mass movement almost from the bottom, he had to be exceptionally frank with his disciples from quite an early stage. After the European War he began looking very far ahead. He sought to create, not an ordinary political party which might play a give-and-take réle among a lot of others, but a revolutionary party which should sweep the national board and brush all the other parties away. Nor was even that revolution the goal of his aims. He desired power not so much for its own sake as for the subsequent course of national policy upon which it would enable him to launch the German people. When it is said sometimes that Hitler is sincere, I think that that is what is meant, and I think it is true. His course, as we shall see, would necessitate the people being ready to endure hardship, to strain every muscle, and eventually to fight a great war. It was not in Hitler's creed that a mass of 60 or 80 million human beings could be carried successfully through an ordeal like that in ignorance. If they were to achieve the journey they must know why they marched. He must enable them to adopt his motives as their own. Therefore he had got to show them what his motives were. It meant much more than attracting them to a political programme in the ordinary sense. He had to give them a whole new *Weltanschauung*, anew way of viewing the universe; a new interpretation, that is, of the meaning of life and the objects of national policy. Of that *Weltanschauung*—pardon my using the word, but there is no compact word in English that quite gives the meaning—*Mein Kampf* is the exposition. It is not, on the face of it, a systematic exposition. It was written in two parts, separately; the first in 1924, during a period of detention in a fortress to which Hitler was sentenced for his part in the Munich *Putsch* fiasco of November 1923; and the second after his liberation. The last page of it is dated November 1926.

It is a hotch-potch of the most varied ingredients. Much of it is autobiography, much is doctrine, a good deal is history (often bad history) and much is polemics (usually very abusive polemics). Hitler's powerful mind never underwent in his youth any higher education. In adult life he undoubtedly has read a great deal, besides arguing and making speeches. But his lack of formal intellectual discipline shows itself in a marked incapacity

to arrange his material. He jumps from one topic to another, like the open-air speaker that he used to be. He is full of repetitions and digressions. And though he does, of course, make some show of grouping particular subjects in particular chapters, it is broadly true to say of the book that any subject may turn up on almost any page. That renders it confusing and boring to the foreign reader, and explains why so few foreigners have, I think, effectively read it. And yet it really is a very powerful book, not merely because, if you read it in the German, the terse, harsh staccato rhetoric gives you the sense of a very strong personality, but because, while it lacks logical sequence, it by no means lacks logic. Its varied themes do cohere, and are masterfully bound together to form a single network of wide-reaching yet consistent argumentation.

Another hindrance to the foreign reader is that without a knowledge that in most cases he will not possess he can hardly appreciate the interest of the autobiographical part. And yet that is a very important part. Hitler himself says expressly that the key to his whole mental development lies in his pre-War experiences at Vienna; and it is clear that, at any rate on the emotional side, his guiding hates were derived from that—hatred of the Habsburgs, of the Czechs, of the Jews, of the Socialists, and of parliamentary institutions. It was from observing the Viennese Socialists, he also tells us, that he learned the methods of terrorisation and gangsterism which he himself adopted and perfected, first for national and later for international purposes. Here are two passages which form an interesting account of that technique. The first runs:

> The mentality of the people at large is not sensitive to anything hesitant and weak. Like a woman whose inner sensibilities are not so much swayed by reason as by a vague emotional longing after the strength that is her complement and who would therefore rather bow to a strong man than lord it over a weak man, so the masses would sooner be bossed than supplicated, and feel more reassured by a doctrine that brooks no rival than by one that offers them a liberal choice. With the latter they scarcely know how to deal; and tend therefore to feel let down. Of the barefaced intimidation practised on their minds, or the violent outrage committed upon their human liberty, they are no more conscious than they are of the whole doctrine's fallacies. They see only the ruthless force and brutality of its determined utterances, to which in the end they always succumb.

There you see a view of human nature like that expressed in three well-known lines of Browning:

> Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!
> Right arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat!
> Never dares the man put off the prophet.

Hitler does not put off the prophet. He has based his practice on that principle, and his book exemplifies it at every turn. And yet such is its

extraordinary candour in this and in many other matters that even while doing so it admits what it is doing.

Here is my second passage:

> The Social Democrats would pick out the adversary whom they thought most formidable [this is an account of the Social Democrats in Vienna and their technique for dealing with political enemies] and on a given signal discharge against him a regular drumfire of lies and slanders. They went on with it, until the nerves of the other side broke down and to get some peace they sacrificed the victim. Only they never got their peace, the fools! The same tactics were repeated over and over again until fear of the mad dogs exercised through suggestion the effect of paralysis.

Well, you could scarcely get a better description of how Hitler himself has dealt with his opponents—first in internal German politics, and then in the international field with such men as Schuschnigg and Beneš. He tells us quite frankly in the book how, observing what the Socialists did, he resolved to copy them and was confident he could better their example.

But let us return to our main track. To follow Hitler's argument in all its branches would be a task far beyond our scale and scope to-night. What I propose to attempt here is to give the briefest outline that I can contrive of his general *Weltanschauung*, and then in more detail show how he applies it in the field of politics and particularly in that of foreign policy.

He starts with a theory, largely false but fanatically believed in, of race. Mankind consists of many and varied races, but the law of higher life and progress, whether spiritual, artistic, economic, is due to one of them only—variously called Aryan or Nordic. This race has acted and re-enacted, countless times over in history, a particular drama. Members of it having, in virtue of their native superiority, overrun large non-Aryan regions and subdued the non-Aryan inhabitants to their purposes, have built up on the basis of the non-Aryans' brute labour a great edifice of civilisation. These edifices have in turn decayed and collapsed. Why? Hitler's answer is: through miscegenation. The conquering ruling minority has intermarried with its subjects, and being much fewer than they has had its blood swamped by theirs. Only by keeping its blood pure could it have preserved and extended the civilisation, which sprang from its hereditary racial qualities and from them alone. The business therefore of a modern Nordic nation whose blood is that of the supreme race, is to keep that blood pure, and at the same time to maximise its pure offspring in every possible way and to quarter it out over the face of the earth as strongly as possible. Its spread and its dominance are desirable, not only in its own interests, but in those of the rest of mankind, who can hope to derive progress and civilisation from no other source.

Now when you ask what modern nations find themselves in this exalted

position of duty and privilege, the answer first and foremost is: the Germans. Germany is the Nordic Great Power. The only other great European nation with any comparable claim is the British. Our past success in quartering out a largely Nordic stock over vast areas of the world outside Europe always evokes Hitler's sincere respect; as you remember it did in his last speech to the German Parliament. But no such even partial equality is conceded to any of Germany's chief neighbours. The French were always a people of mongrels, and are now on the way to becoming a "mulatto empire." As for the Slavs, of whatever kind, they belong to a totally inferior order of humanity and have, as against Germans, no moral rights. If a German ruler conquers Slav land and dispossesses its Slavs in order to settle Germans on it, he is doing not merely a patriotic but a highly moral act; since it is the interest of humanity as a whole that the habitat of the higher race should be extended. A logical but rather unexpected corollary of the same theory is that it is wrong to Germanise subject Slavs. Hitler inveighs against the policies of Habsburg rulers like Joseph II who tried to make the Czechs speak German. For him it is the race that is vital, not the language, and a German-speaking Slav is a danger to race purity. It is one of the few glaring inconsistencies in his book that while inveighing against the Habsburgs on that score he also blames bitterly the Badeni language decrees and other concessions to the Slav languages made under Francis Joseph. But that indeed, like much else of his intense hatred of the Habsburgs, seems to be mere blind prejudice inherited from his youthful activity as a follower of pan-Germanism in pre-War Vienna.

The general picture, then, is of one strong creative race and a varied lot of weak non-creative races, who are as wax for the strong race to mould. But there is yet another race to be accounted for, whose faults are not negative but positive, a sort of Satan among the nations. It is active, aggressive, it has no *Lebensraum* of its own, but preys parasitically on that of others, and even permeates the Nordic paradise itself, poisoning, polluting, paralysing. That race is the Jews. The difference between them and races like the Slavs is that while the latter may be quite useful in the German habitat, if they are kept down in a servile capacity, the Jews cannot be tolerated in any capacity. The only way to deal with them is to get rid of them altogether.

Now these doctrines may sound crude; as indeed they are. But they were exceedingly well-suited for German consumption after the War. To begin with, it is and has long been an almost universal habit among Germans to regard themselves as a race naturally gifted above all other races, a sort of top and crown of mankind. No other great people, I think, has quite an equivalent habit. French, British, Americans, each commonly believe that their particular nation has the greatest record in the world, and are ready to strain history to prove it. But you do not find them feeling that their race is a

separate species of humanity, superior to any other. The Germans do. There are some fairly obvious reasons for it, I think. For French, British and Americans the political unit, the nation, is what unites. But the Germans before Bismarck never had been a nation in the political sense, and even Bismarck brought only about three-quarters of them under a common flag. Hence they thought of themselves not as a nation but as a people, a *Volk*, and so, if you like, a race, scattered about Europe under many flags, and everywhere far superior to the people among whom they lived. Note, too, that their sense of superiority was not unplausible. Everywhere in Central and Eastern Europe the German populations can be seen by the naked eye to be hard-working, thrifty, honest, progressive, with clean persons, clean houses, decent sanitation and well-attended schools. By contrast the Slavs (the Czechs alone excepted) have much lower standards, and appear in the mass as being backward, thriftless, shifty, dirty, verminous, insanitary and illiterate. "Where Germanism ends," a German once said to me, "the louse and the bug begin." The reasons for this difference are not really race, of course, but may be found much more in history, tradition, religion, economics and other things. But the difference is there, and race pride was not a surprising result.

That is why the Eastern post-War settlements rankled so bitterly in Germany. Even Liberal Germans thought that the freedom of Poles or Czechs was too dearly purchased, if it entailed putting German minorities under them. They felt rather as Americans would if a foreign conqueror were to put the Southern States under negro rule. Even in 1927, when Germany was perhaps more peaceful and more republican than at any other time, and when there happened to be some small controversies with Poland, I could not, on a visit, find anyone who would discuss the Poles on any other hypothesis than that they were in effect sub-human. When, therefore, Hitler proclaimed the Germans a ruling race, and denounced the post-War Treaties as an infamous violation of the rights of the ruling race, and insisted not only on abrogating them but on aiming to bring all Germans under the German flag and on immensely extending the German habitat, it gave his readers and hearers the same sort of satisfaction that one might imagine a bow feels when its string has been drawn abnormally taut and it is suddenly released to spring away in the other direction.

Let us next examine more specially this question of the German people's habitat, for in it is the key to Hitler's foreign policy. The main discussions about it are in the fourth chapter of the first part and the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of the second part of his book, but it keeps cropping up all over the book and always in terms that are clear, consistent, fundamental. Every people, says Hitler, if it is to live healthily must have a sufficient area to live in. Further, since as we have seen it is the duty of the Nordic race

rapidly to increase its numbers, Germany, as the home of the great Nordic people, must have a large amount of extra space for future expansion. Now, how is she situated in these respects? The answer is that she has nothing like enough land for the present, let alone for the future. With an annual increase given by Hitler as 900,000, she must face famine unless ways and means are found which will forestall the danger of misery and hunger. Four solutions, says Hitler, are possible. (1) Contraceptive limitation of births. That is rejected; being, of course, in complete disagreement with his whole position. (2) "Internal colonisation," a German phrase meaning what we should call a small-holdings movement. This, he says rightly enough, could never cover any large part of the problem. (3) Acquisition of new territory beyond the existing frontiers, enabling more Germans to live by the land. (4) Increase of manufactures for export enabling more Germans to live on the existing territory by foreign trade. The real choice is between (3) and (4). The rulers of pre-War Germany from 1870 onwards chose (4), that is, industrialisation for export. They ought, says Hitler, to have chosen (3)—more peasant production in a greatly enlarged national territory.

Why does Hitler reject the export solution? For three reasons. First, because it involves urbanising and proletarianising the people. Himself a poor country boy driven to Vienna to earn his living, he hates the process. Secondly, because it puts German life at the mercy of vicissitudes in foreign countries which it cannot control. Thirdly, a too compact country is vulnerable in war. A country like Russia or the United States with its population well spread out over a vast area derives defensive strength from its very vastness. A certain size is necessary for the seat of a World Power. At present Germany is not one. But she must become one or perish. What size, then? Well, look at Soviet Russia, says Hitler, look at the British Empire or the United States, China or even the French Empire. Beside any of these Germany's existing territory seems in another class. She must expand. But how? Overseas colonies will not do for this purpose, since none could be obtained suitable for settling millions of white peasants. On the other hand, east of Germany's present living space, in the vast plain of Central and Eastern Europe, immense fertile areas exist as yet thinly populated by inferior peoples. Able to be reached by land, to be conquered and held by the army, and to form with existing Germany a single continuous realm, those areas provide the only and the perfect solution. But how can they be obtained? How, answers Hitler, originally were the two Ostmarks obtained, East Prussia and Austria? How indeed, if you look back far enough, were most of the present German territories obtained? By the German sword followed up by the German plough. Hitler does not flinch from the frank avowal that his policy must be one of annexation by force and that the main victim to be despoiled is Russia. He answers objectors on the first point by saying that all frontiers and all titles to territory were established by force

originally, and on the second by pointing to Russia's Bolshevik disorganisation as a providential opportunity for Germany. But the bedrock policy is clear. Germany can only save herself by a vast eastern annexation. She can only achieve the annexation by a European war, and for that war she must start arming herself at top speed at once. Not only limitation of arms but every confining shackle of the Versailles system Germany must in due course ruthlessly strike away. The actual order of the steps taken since 1933 —rearmament, remilitarisation of the Rhineland, absorption of Austria, subjugation of Czechoslovakia, and next the prospective subjection of Poland and Roumania—has conformed to a perfectly logical sequence. As to the stage at which Hitler would have to fight his decisive war, it is clear that he hoped, as results proved rightly, that rearmament, remilitarisation of the Rhineland and Austria could be achieved without fighting. The Czechoslovak stage he was bound to assume could not. He was ready to launch the supreme war last September. And to-day it may even be that he feels sorry because, yielding to others, he did not do so.

I am aware that some English experts do not attach all that importance to the idea of *Lebensraum* in Hitler's thinking, but unless he has changed since *Mein Kampf*, of which there is less than no evidence, I think they are clearly wrong. For in the book it is the cardinal concept in foreign policy. It comes out at all sorts of points. It founds, for instance, the whole of the long, vehement and in some ways very acute criticisms, which he passes on Germany's pre-War foreign policies. The real task, he says, for her pre-War statesmen was to provide new *Lebensraum* for Germans; and what they ought to have done was to take advantage of England's long hostility to Russia to ally themselves with her in an anti-Russian war, and get the necessary annexations as the reward of victory. What they did instead was to mess about with colonies, exports and a navy, thereby antagonising England; and to prop up the rotten bulk of Austria-Hungary, which, lying between them and Eastern Europe, actually shut them off from what should have been their goal. In the same way he denounces post-War reversions, like Rapallo, to the old tradition of Prusso-Russian friendship. But it is not merely his thoughts on foreign policy, but his thoughts on home policy also, that are rigidly hitched to this waggon. He is, at heart, as I have said, a countryman. His hatred for the misery and degradation which he saw in working-class Vienna, is blistering. He regards factories and great cities as man-eaters, farms and craft-trades as man-makers. Beyond the industries that are needed to provide war materials, he does not want any more than will create autarkic reciprocity between town and country, each deriving all that it needs from the other and consuming the whole of the other's output. His conception of the future Great Germany is essentially a rural one; and if he were to swerve from his scheme of annexation, he would have not only to eat almost every word that he has written about foreign policy, but to deny all his domestic

ideals regarding the basis of what he considers a desirable life for the human race. Over and over again it recurs. Let me just give you some examples: "Frontiers to States are made by men and men can alter them." "The *right* to acquire land and soil can become a *duty*, if without an extension of soil a great people appears doomed to destruction." Or let me read you the conclusion of the matter as expressed on one of the last pages of the book: "The rightness of that foreign policy can only be recognised in a bare century's time, if by then 250 million Germans are living on this continent—and living, not squeezed together as factory coolies for the rest of the world, but as peasants and workers who, through what they produce, reciprocally assure a livelihood to each other." You see the points there. You see first of all the immense figure—250 million Germans in a century. And you see he wants them to be well spread out. Eighty million Germans are at present living on an area that is certainly not more than two-thirds, perhaps not more than half, what it should be in his view. You have got to double the territory and then treble the population. It means an empire something like five or six times the present area of Germany. That, of course, means absorbing not only the Ukraine as it was ceded under the Treaty of Brestlitovsk, but a very much larger area. Mind you, geographically those areas do exist. The Euro-Asiatic land mass is far the most enormous thing in the world, and it is thinly populated; the Germans could spread eastward right over it. Secondly, there is that vivid phrase about factory coolies. There you see the Hitler view (and I venture to say every born countryman's view) of the idea of making a white country the workshop of the world: the *factory coolies* of the rest of the world!

Now those, I think, are key sentences in *Mein Kampf*. Far more so than sayings more often quoted in our newspapers, like that about France as the eternal enemy. As a matter of fact, Hitler himself says about France that he will only be obliged to fight her in order to clear his rear, because he feels sure that she will not stand by and let him seize his prey without interfering.

Ought, then, France—and ought Great Britain—to stand by and give him what has been called a free hand in the east? We know that some influential people, especially in the City of London, have been advocating that in recent years. And indeed to a considerable extent the idea underlay the jettisoning of Czechoslovakia last autumn. But it surely will not pass the test of thought. The new German empire would be so strongly placed, so populous, so rich in every resource and so self-sufficing, so powerful in every way, that no other nation could stand against it. I have heard naive people object that Great Britain at least could save her Empire by her Navy. They forget that navies to-day are things of steel, quickly built and quickly outbuilt, and that an impregnable continental block which in man-power, steel-power, coal-power, oil-power, stood to this island as a giant to a pigmy, would not be likely to

allow the island very much longer to rule the seas, or indeed to rule anything else. No, when we come to see what is the goal of Hitler's Germany we cannot take refuge in the idea that it does not concern us.

It is a crazy book, *Mein Kampf*, and yet, as I have said, an extremely powerful one. Behind its crudities there is a blend of intense idealism and crabbed argument, a combination that often rather reminds us, though Hitler would abhor the comparison, of St. Paul. In an age of moral relaxation and hedonistic self-seeking Hitler stood out unabashed as the apostle of effort, duty, self-sacrifice, the idealistic subordination of individual interests to those of the community; and he won his power on that appeal. Never did anybody live more emphatically by the belief that spirit dominates matter, that where there is a will there is a way.

Now let me read you just one other passage. Hitler has been saying here that Germany must be armed, and has met with the objection: "How can we rearm? We have no arms; we are surrounded by armed neighbours who do not want us to have any, and have forbidden us to have any; how can we move to do anything?" Hitler says:

> The question of recovering German power is not, 'How can we manufacture arms?' but 'How can we produce the spirit which makes a people able to carry arms?' If that spirit rules a people, the will finds thousands of ways, any one of which will get the arms for them. Give a coward ten pistols, and when he is attacked he will not be able to fire one shot. Those pistols are of less use to him than a mere blackthorn would be to a brave man.

Well, I do not like Hitler, frankly, and I think he is a world danger. But he is, if ever a man was, *der mutige Mann*.

Summary of Discussion

DR. G. P. GOOCH (in the Chair) said that it was the first time that a book had been chosen as the subject of an address at the Institute. For this there were many good reasons. *Mein Kampf* stood in a class by itself. Firstly, it was the best best-seller in the world. The sales had already passed the five million mark; Mr. Wells' *Outline of History* was running between the two and three million mark.

Secondly, *Mein Kampf* might be said to have "made history." Politically it was the most influential book which had appeared in any part of the world within the present century, and would probably rank in generations to come with those great explosive works such as *The Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx, perhaps the most influential political book of the nineteenth century,

and Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*, of which George III had said in memorable words that every gentleman ought to read it.

Thirdly, *Mein Kampf* was a political autobiography and apologia, and as such only one of a very large family, including Clarendon, Bismarck, von Bülow, Lord Grey and Mr. Lloyd George, not to mention many others; but whereas most of these books were written at the end of a man's life, as a chronicle and a guide for those who should come after him, Hitler's autobiography had been written not after he had finished his work, but just as he was beginning it. Therefore, although the autobiographical part was very interesting, and indeed indispensable to an understanding of one of the most complex figures on the modern stage, more interesting even still was the programme. Already a great deal of that programme had been carried out. Certainly this book, which was such an extraordinary medley of wisdom and folly, phantasy and statesmanship, could not be ignored, and it was a very good thing that there was now on sale an English translation for those who knew no German.

QUESTION: Where, among the races other than Aryans, had Hitler placed the Italians? Had he spoken of Germany needing allies, and had an Axis ever been contemplated in *Mein Kampf*?

MR. ENSOR said that in *Mein Kampf* Hitler had said that Germany must never again make the mistake she had made in 1914 in getting all the nations against her. She must divide Europe, and some of the peoples must be on her side. In considering those who could be on her side, he had decided upon England and Italy; and since gaining power he had wooed England and won Italy.

QUESTION: How far did the people of Germany really believe in *Mein Kampf*?

MR. ENSOR replied that the extent to which Hitler, at any given moment, was carrying the nation with him was always difficult to estimate, but, broadly speaking, he had swept the country, of that there could be no doubt.

MR. C. H. LUKE asked whether the lecturer would not agree that the philosophy expressed in *Mein Kampf* was no more than the coping-stone of German agitation over the centuries through her philosophers and teachers.

MR. ENSOR said that he had explained that before Hitler had come to power the people of Germany had considered themselves as belonging to a superior race. The reasons for this could be found quite a long way back in their history. Fichte had been partly responsible for it, but it had become

very marked since about the middle of the last century, because in the early part of the last century Germany had achieved a very remarkable simultaneity of excellences. There had been the great German universities—scholarship and history practically refounded, philosophy developed beyond anything attempted in any other country, progress, too, in the natural sciences. At the same time the great German musicians had made music appear almost a German monopoly, and simultaneously had come Goethe and Schiller. In the same period Germany had come to the top in war, defeating Napoleon at Leipzig and Waterloo. All these things occurring simultaneously constituted rather a remarkable achievement.

QUESTION: Did not the lecturer think that the desperate solution of Eastern Europe as laid down in the Versailles Treaty had facilitated Hitler's plans to take over the Succession States piecemeal?

MR. ENSOR said that he did not consider the solutions for Eastern Europe contained in the Versailles Treaty as desperate. Broadly speaking, he thought that they had been just solutions. Certain things had been omitted. It would have been a good thing to set up some sort of economic system between the Succession States. Broadly speaking, however, he thought it right that the Poles, the Czechs and the Roumanians should be free.

QUESTION: Had any mention of naval power been made in *Mein Kampf*, or did Hitler consider that power on land would be sufficient ? Had he mentioned possible conflict with any naval Power?

MR. ENSOR replied that Hitler's general argument was that, if land supremacy were secured, then all these things would be added unto it. But in the meantime it was necessary to avoid the mistake made by earlier German statesmen of trying to do the whole thing at once. Pre-War German statesmen had made the great mistake of antagonising Great Britain before they had solved the French and Russian problem.

QUESTION: The lecturer had stated that Hitler had thought that he could get rearmament, the occupation of the Rhineland and the *Anschluss* without war, but that after that point he had been prepared to fight; was this stated in *Mein Kampf*?

MR. ENSOR replied that Hitler had not stated in *Mein Kampf* the exact point at which he would have to fight. It had been his (Mr. Ensor's) diagnosis that he had considered it would be over the question of Czechoslovakia.

QUESTION: Did the lecturer think that, in common with the Poles, the Czechs and the Roumanians, the peoples of Russia should also have been freed under the Versailles Treaty and would this have strengthened the bloc

against Germany's eastward expansion?

MR. ENSOR replied that certain parts of Russian territory had been dealt with in the Treaty of Versailles. The Baltic States had been given independence. But the Allies had not been in a position to do more, though they had played with the idea of waging war on Russia and extracting, for instance, the Ukraine.

QUESTION: Had air power been an idea of Herr Hitler or had it been a later idea of General Goering?

MR. ENSOR replied that there was no actual mention of air power in *Mein Kampf*.

QUESTION: Did the lecturer think that it was the logical outcome of *Mein Kampf* for the next step to be taken by Hitler against either Poland or Roumania?

MR. ENSOR replied that certainly the Poles and the Roumanians must be brought under the German wing before she could expand farther east.

QUESTION: Had Herr Hitler spoken in *Mein Kampf* of his forth-coming struggle with Christianity?

MR. ENSOR replied that there was much discussion of religion in *Mein Kampf*, but this was one point where Hitler had gone beyond his book. The pagan, anti-Christian movement in Nazi Germany which had developed since 1933 had gone far beyond *Mein Kampf*. Hitler had even criticised the unwisdom of attempting to interfere with religious bodies. He had criticised the policy of the pan-Germans in pre-War Vienna who had antagonised the Catholic Church. In this matter his book had been more wise than his government.

PROFESSOR R. W. SETON-WATSON said that he was in entire agreement with Mr. Ensor as to the way in which *Mein Kampf* revealed the character of Herr Hitler, as a blend of fanatical idealist and utter cynic. Men who knew him would maintain that utter disbelief in human nature is a dominant trait in that character. Hard times, such as he went through in early life, tended to turn a man either into a disbeliever in humanity or into a saint. The book was also a blend of *Wahrheit* and *Dichtung*—sometimes bordering on the apocalyptic, sometimes containing fantastically false statements, in which, however, Herr Hitler quite obviously believed. Two good examples were his assertion that Francis Ferdinand was making Czech policy, and that the Viennese Jewish Press was working against Berlin, whereas it was, notoriously, in those pre-War years a tool of the Wilhelmstrasse.

The book contained certain fixed ideas. First, Herr Hitler's indictment of the Jews, which was based often on hysteria and fantastic misconceptions. Then his conviction that Marxism was the logical outcome of democracy and parliamentary government. Then again the claim that the Versailles Treaty was one of the greatest crimes in history, and a flagrant violation of the Fourteen Points of President Wilson. In reality only three of the Fourteen Points could even remotely be said to have been violated by the Allies, while many of them related to matters which did not directly affect Germany (Turkey, Russia, etc.). It was, moreover, far too often forgotten that Wilson built up his whole system of the Fourteen Points on a demand for the establishment of Democracy and Pacifism, both of which were anathema to Herr Hitler and constantly denounced by him. This was a fundamental contradiction.

Professor Seton-Watson then referred to Hitler's propagandist methods, based above all on utter contempt for public opinion. In one passage he spoke of the public as "the great stupid flock of sheep"; in another he said his aim is "to force a doctrine upon a whole people," and that "the rightness of propaganda must be judged exclusively by its real effect." In other words, its truth did not matter. "By skilful and sustained use of propaganda one can make a people see even Heaven as Hell, or the most wretched life as paradise." Dr. Goebbels openly declared that propaganda should not be *anständig*, but simply successful. This was what the rest of the world is up against—a solid mass of people who believed that the sole solution for every problem in Germany and in Europe must rest on force.

Herr Hitler followed up *Mein Kampf* by a long series of speeches, containing many misstatements which had gone unchecked. It was high time that they were refuted and challenged, point by point, by responsible statesmen, and not only by a few individuals in opposition. Doubtless a part of the deliberate policy of appeasement was not to answer back or to become involved in polemics: and there was much to be said for this, so long as "appeasement" could be regarded as practicable. But it was only effective when both sides showed the same restraint. When, however, the spokesman of one side poured forth an unending stream of eloquent but false propaganda and got a free advertisement in the world press, while the spokesman of the other remained silent, or was content with a neat phrase about "declamation" or "defence, not defiance," the only possible result was that the undefended thesis should seem to go by default. All the more satisfactory was it to see, at long last, Lord Halifax's refutation of the absurd myth that Britain went to war with Germany in 1914 to ruin her trade (and this refutation was an admirable example of *suaviter in modo*), and again *The Times'* challenge to that other myth that Germany was not beaten in the field but only surrendered on terms which we then failed to observe.

A similar myth was the old charge of encirclement, between 1908 and 1914, and once again to-day. This had been often denied in the House of Commons, but it was necessary that it should be not merely denied, but *refuted*, on the basis of the historical facts, by an official spokesman; and this would be perfectly possible, without undue verbosity or display of academic learning. Explode the pre-war *Einkreisung* myth, and you were in a fair way to exploding the new version (and incidentally, the very dangerous legend that Poland and the Ukraine were thinly populated and therefore suited for alien colonisation, whereas in reality both are very thickly populated). It seemed to him vital that both our statesmen and our historians should take this matter up, and see that the British case was presented, in *German*, on the wireless, to the German public, in urbane, conciliatory, but absolutely firm and concrete form, with chapter and verse for every assertion.

MR. J. A. HUTTON said that the character of Herr Hitler was shown very clearly in *Mein Kampf*. Immediately one saw the contrast between him and his partner in the Axis. Mussolini was the opportunist, pure and simple, whose policy changed from day to day, and who took whatever was offered. Hitler had declared his policy in advance, and it had been there for all to see, though many had been until recently extremely blind. The basis of that policy was Germany's living room; she must expand. If that statement were accepted, Germany was at the moment the victim of a policy of encirclement to prevent her from carrying out this necessary expansion. Right through the book he inveighed against encirclement and stressed the fact that Germany must never again fight on two fronts. The major war must come, but not until Germany was sure of victory. Great Britain was to remain neutral till the minor Powers were destroyed and Germany was powerful enough to dictate to this little island. But by her guarantees to Poland and Roumania Great Britain had suddenly stopped Hitler from marching farther east without having to fight on the west at the same time. The result had been a sudden outburst of anti-British propaganda entirely contrary to the policy outlined in *Mein Kampf*. The speaker foresaw immediate danger to Europe not in the east but in the west, possibly through Spain and Gibraltar. It was not so long since Poland had been one of the wolves round Czechoslovakia. Poland had a desire to become a colonial Power; this could not be achieved as a result of a war with Germany, but could be done by dividing up the British Empire with Germany. So, were hostilities to break out in the west without the east being affected, it might be possible for Germany to maintain neutrality on her eastern front and to seek, first, her living space in the west.

MR. C. H. LUKE said that Herr Hitler had been very fortunate in the people with whom he had been dealing. He had been surprised at the lecturer's strong statement with regard to German character and ability. Certainly Germany was a great nation, but was any nation really great who

could be led by the type of statements made in *Mein Kampf*? He could not see that the world was going to sink under the thunderbolt of a man who spoke as Hitler did in *Mein Kampf*. It should be realised that such plausible statements as that Poland should have peace for twenty-five years if Danzig were allowed to become part of the Reich had a much deeper meaning than at first appeared. There was a quotation in *The Times* of that morning (May 4th, 1939) from the *Osservatore Romano* in which the writer said that the command of Danzig and the mouth of the Vistula was one of the main routes to the hegemony of Europe. If there was talk about whether Danzig was worth a war, it would be desirable to remember that if Danzig went back to the Reich, Hitler would soon be in a position to fortify it and to throttle the nations of Eastern Europe from Poland down to the Black Sea. There was more in the matter than Hitler's command of language and his power over his people. No man would have been able to dominate the United States or the British Empire as Hitler had dominated Germany, and it should be remembered that throughout the ages Germany had never been anything but a nation endeavouring to terrorise somebody. Yet, in spite of this, for hundreds of years she had existed as a number of small States. If Great Britain and America and the other democratic nations were to stand up to Germany and to call Hitler's bluff, then the Reich would soon slip back into the number of small countries into which she had been divided in the past.

MR. G. SOLOVEYTCHIK said that the lecturer had remarked that no nation could maintain a fleet which had not got command of iron and steel. According to *The Daily Telegraph*, Great Britain was at present importing iron and steel from Australia. If with her present industrial apparatus Great Britain needed to import iron and steel, what would be her position if Germany had command not only of the sources on the Continent but also command of the seas? This should be remembered, especially in view of the lecturer's remark that a fleet was not only rapidly built, but rapidly outbuilt.

Concerning Hitler's policy towards Russia, of course *Mein Kampf* did state his desire for the Ukraine and certain parts of Russia, but it should be remembered that up to the signing of the Franco-Soviet Pact Hitler had made friendly overtures to Russia. In an interview with Mr. Ward Price in Berlin in February 1934 he had said that the idea that Germany would take Russian territory was ridiculous. Later, when reviewing his achievements in a speech in the Reichstag, he had emphasised as one of his successes the friendly relations existing between Germany and Russia, and expressed the hope that in spite of ideological differences they would continue to be so. It had not been until July 1934, with the signing of the Franco-Soviet Pact, that he had become so bitterly anti-Russian and presented himself as an anti-Communist crusader. This had certainly served a purpose, particularly with regard to his relations with certain circles in Great Britain, but if the situation were to

continue as at present and the negotiations between the latter and the Soviet Union did not result in any definite agreement, it might be that Hitler and Stalin would again be exchanging compliments. It was by no means beyond the realm of possibility that the resignation of Litvinov, which had been described throughout the world press as a great mystery, might be a first move in this direction.

MR. WILSON HARRIS said that great stress had been laid upon the enormous circulation and effect of *Mein Kampf*. It did not, however, necessarily follow that because a book had a vast circulation that it had a vast influence. In Germany every newly married couple had to have a copy of *Mein Kampf*, every member of the Party and every civil servant also was expected to possess a copy; but there was no law requiring it to be read, and it would not be surprising to learn that it had not been read by many of the people who had it in their possession. How, in fact, had Hitler established his ascendancy over the German people and how was it being maintained to-day? He had first persuaded Hindenburg to make him Chancellor. Then one of his entourage had staged the firing of the Reichstag, which had very nearly caused him to win his first election, so nearly that with the Nationalists he had established a majority in the Reichstag. He had used this to excommunicate the Communist Party and thereby secure a majority. During this time he had used his private army to intimidate the population. He had then proceeded to institute a régime of concentration camps. Herr Himmler had begun his great and successful work. He had secured possession of the Press and the radio and had circulated lies and suppressed the truth. Spies had been established in every block of flats and in every factory, letters had been opened and telephone communications listened to; was it astonishing that in these circumstances Herr Hitler had succeeded in dominating the German people?

MR. FRANK HARDIE said that he wished to supplement the point made by Professor Seton-Watson about the importance of refuting the arguments of Herr Hitler by a plain unvarnished statement of the facts over the wireless and in German; he wanted to suggest that there were in Great Britain a great number of distinguished German refugees whose services could be most usefully employed in this connection and who would most willingly give those services.

LIEUT.-COLONEL C. WALEY-COHEN said that it would be very interesting to hear how much of Hitler's foreign policy as contained in *Mein Kampf* was his own and how much had come from his entourage. His ideas concerning a Mittel-Europa were very like those which had had their birth between 1901 and 1913 in Bohemia, which had eventually been absorbed into Czechoslovakia. He had heard the view that a great deal of the detail of

Hitler's foreign policy had come from his entourage, and from descendants and successors of those with similar ideas before the War.

MR. ENSOR said that Professor Seton-Watson had contributed an admirable supplement to his own address.

It had been suggested that the refusal of Great Britain to allow Germany to proceed eastwards unchecked might change Hitler's orientation for the time being. This might be so, as he was a very elastic tactician. He had a perfectly clear goal from which he would never swerve, but he would be prepared to approach it from the best possible angle and if he felt the menace in his rear, Great Britain as well as France, to be too great, he might think it a good policy to join with Mussolini and try to isolate the two Western Powers by buying off the Eastern Powers for the time being. It was most probable that he was trying to do that at the present moment. Whether M. Litvinov's resignation indicated a sensational success in this direction was not known, but it was a natural interpretation.

Concerning his statements about German pre-eminence in certain fields, he had not wished to suggest that the Germans were necessarily the greatest people in the world, but that between 1790 and 1830 they had had a great simultaneous flowering in many directions: poets, philosophers, historians, scientists, scholars and musicians. No other nation had ever produced quite so many eminent men and men of genius in so many different fields within so short a space of time.

It was true that Danzig was one of the key points of Europe, and if ever there were such a thing as a people's "living space," then Danzig belonged to Poland. The Poles were the people of the Vistula.

He did not think that much importance need be attached to the fact that Great Britain was importing iron and steel from Australia. A great deal of iron and steel had always been imported by the big iron and steel countries. Before the War Great Britain had tended largely to import German steel to build her ships. This had been more ominous, but there was no reason why she should not now buy some from Australia. A curious thing was that a great deal of the steel with which Germany had carried out her rearmament had been sold to her by England and France; and she was still receiving quite a lot from them.

It might be true that in 1934 Hitler had said that he did not want Russian territory. Later than that he had said that he did not want Czech territory. On the other hand, a Russo-German *rapprochement* was quite possible. After Rapallo there had been a large number of Russian Army

officers who had been in close contact with their German opposite numbers; and there had been a good deal of talk about making some sort of bargain over the Ukraine. Very few Russian officers thought that they could stand up to Germany. The earthen pot and the iron pot had often clashed, and always the earthen pot had been broken. This might be to the detriment of Great Britain.

The influence of *Mein Kampf* had certainly been very small outside Germany, but in Germany there was no doubt that its contents were well known and had been swallowed whole by the younger and more active elements in the country. Some months ago he had spoken with a very intelligent German refugee who had left the country only in November. He had said that the educated classes and the great landowners were now bitterly sorry that they had ever allowed the Nazi régime to be established, but the proletariat as a body were for the Government. Those who before had been Communists and Socialists were now Nazis, as were all the youth of the country; and until some disaster changed their outlook they would continue to be so. Of course the régime had been maintained by force. It was the only way in which such a régime could be maintained. Very much the same type of thing had occurred during the régime of Napoleon III. The same type of thing was taking place in Italy.

How many of Hitler's ideas were his own and how many had come from his entourage was an interesting topic for speculation. But the important thing was that he had made those ideas his own. Fundamentally, in that sense, he was sincere. He had a creed which he was prepared to carry through to the end.